



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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STATE LEGISLATORS HEADED TO THE CLASSROOM **LAWMAKERS MAKE PLANS TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL** **BACK TO SCHOOL WEEK**

Summer is over or about to be over for Louisiana ' school children. As they settle down for another year of classes, Louisiana's state legislators are making plans to go back to the classroom as well.

Louisiana lawmakers will join their counterparts around the country for America's Legislators Back to School Week, September 20-24. The Back to School program is a bipartisan event designed to teach young people - the nation's future voters and leaders-what it's like to be a state legislator: the processes, the pressures, the debate, negotiation and compromise that are the very fabric of representative democracy.

The program is a product of the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) civic education initiative, the Trust for Representative Democracy. Based on the ideas and fundamental principles set forth by the framers of the Constitution, the Trust is designed to engage young people and build their understanding and support for America's democratic institutions.

Beginning as a pilot program in 1999, the program was expanded from a day to a week in 2001 to allow legislators and educators more flexibility in scheduling classroom visits. Extensive educational materials, tailored to meet the needs of elementary, middle and high school students, have been developed over the years for use in the classroom during America's Legislators Back To School Week and throughout the school year. The materials challenge the students to

think about how they feel about government and how representative democracy relates to them.

The program is endorsed and supported by civic organizations and the education community, including the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard and the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana.

Other organizations that support the program and are working in a cooperative effort with Louisiana state legislators on the Back to School project are the Louisiana School Boards Association, Louisiana Association of School Superintendents, Louisiana Association of Principals, Louisiana Association of Educators, Louisiana Federation of Teachers and the Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana.

The House and Senate Public Information offices received the Margaret McDonald Journalism Award, first place for community or institutional relations, presented by the Louisiana Press Women for the 2002 Back to School Program. And, in 2001, the House and Senate Public Information offices received a Lantern Award of Excellence from the Southern Public Relations Federation for Louisiana's 2000 Back to School Program.

More information on the program may be obtained online through NCSL at www.ncsl.org/public/backsch.htm or at the Louisiana Legislature's homepage www.legis.state.la.us

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ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS: To schedule interviews with legislators for advance stories or coverage of the school visits in your area, please contact Sheila McCant (225-342-9795) for House members and Brenda Hodge (225-342-9737) for Senate members.